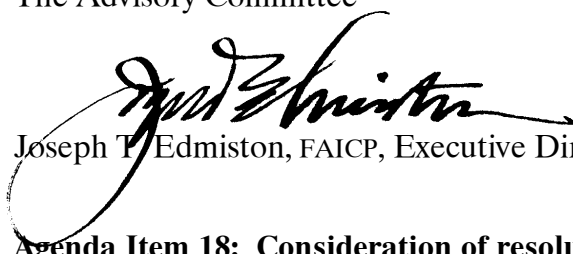


Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: August 30, 2004

From :  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Executive Director

Subject: **Agenda Item 18: Consideration of resolution authorizing entering into the Newhall Ranch High Country Recreation and Conservation Authority, a Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement between the City of Santa Clarita, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, and the County of Los Angeles.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy approve the resolution authorizing entering into the Newhall Ranch High Country Recreation and Conservation Authority, a Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement between the Conservancy, the City of Santa Clarita, and the County of Los Angeles for the ownership and management of the Newhall Ranch project Special Management Areas and Westridge Open Space in unincorporated Santa Clarita.

Legislative Authority: The Joint Exercise of Powers Act (Chapter 5, commencing with § 6500 of Division 7 of Title 1 of the Government Code) provides:

§ 6502. If authorized by their legislative or other governing bodies, two or more public agencies by agreement may jointly exercise any power common to the contracting parties

§ 6503. The agreements shall state the purpose of the agreement or the power to be exercised. They shall provide for the method by which the purpose will be accomplished or the manner in which the power will be exercised.

Background: The Conservancy and the City of Santa Clarita formed the Santa Clarita Watershed Recreation and Conservation Authority (SCWRCA) in 1993 for the purpose of working for the common goals of open space preservation and watershed protection in the Santa Clarita area. SCWRCA has provided an important focus on cooperative planning and resource issues in the Santa Clarita Woodlands, wildlife corridors, upper Santa Clara River watershed, trails, and Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor (including Angeles National Forest interface). The SCWRCA JPA Governing Board consist of four members, two appointed by the Conservancy and two appointed by the City. The City Council appoints the City Manager and the Director of Parks, Recreation, and Community Services as its representatives to SCWRCA. The Conservancy's current appointees are Jerome C. Daniel and Michael D. Berger.

Since its inception, SCWRCA has worked closely with the Conservancy and the City on a variety of open space projects including the Santa Clarita Woodlands Park, Mentryville restoration, the purchase of the Rivendale Ranch, and advocacy for *public* open space dedications from the Newhall Ranch and Westridge projects. In 2002 SCWRCA acquired Whitney Canyon Park, the first property owned by the JPA.

In 1998, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors required, as part of its approval of the Newhall Ranch project, that approximately 6,000 acres of open space within the project area be dedicated as open space and that “a method for insuring meaningful local participation in management of the property” be formulated, along with conditions for joint powers ownership of the High Country open space. Either an expanded SCWRCA or the new JPA now proposed is to include four county representatives appointed by the Board of Supervisors.

Subsequent to the Board of Supervisors action, the SCWRCA Board reviewed the County requirement and discussed amending the JPA to allow for additional members from the unincorporated areas to provide oversight of the management of the new open space. Between August 19, 1998 and September 14, 1998, SCWRCA, the City Council, and the Conservancy all approved amending the SCWRCA JPA to add additional members to reflect the Newhall High Country at such time as the land was transferred. Also, during the County approvals for the Westridge project, an additional 140 acres of oak woodland were added to the scope of the JPA members’ oversight.

As the Newhall Ranch project moved forward after litigation and as the Westridge project began construction, staff from Conservancy, the County, and the City began discussions on the JPA and the types of amendments necessary to the JPA to ensure this new open space would be managed to public expectations for resource protection and public access.

During the initial discussions that began in 2003, the County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation proposed a separate JPA alternative to the expansion of SCWRCA, primarily for technical and fiscal procedural issues. As envisioned, the new JPA, titled the Newhall Ranch High Country Recreation and Conservation Authority (NRHCRCA), would be charged with ownership, management and conservation oversight of the open space dedications. Staffs from the County, the City, Conservancy, and Newhall Land crafted the provisions of the attached draft Agreement, which has been reviewed and approved by the Conservancy Staff Counsel and County Counsel.

In order to provide consistency with Santa Clarita Valley open space issues, the new JPA would incorporate the existing four board members of SCWRCA into its structure and combine them with four new members appointed by the County. The membership make-up is more specifically defined in the attached Agreement. The parties intend that the two JPA’s, (SCWRCA

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and NRHCWRCA) would meet concurrently or back-to-back to facilitate the broadest public participation, integration of management activities, and to minimize any additional administrative burden. The new JPA would focus only on the Newhall Ranch and Westridge open space and would not vote on SCWRCA-related issues.

The City hearing to enter into NRHCWRCA is agendaized for September 2. If the City and the Conservancy both approve and sign, the Agreement will then be heard by the Board of Supervisors, probably in October.